

105th Congress, some Members insisted that it contained the same emergency care standard that was provided for in the Balanced Budget Act. In October 1998, thirty Members who had voted for H.R. 4250 recognized that the language was not the same and wrote the Speaker asking that the true prudent layperson standard—reflecting the BBA provisions and consistent with EMTALA—be included in any patients' rights legislation that moved forward.

Regrettably, the 105th Congress adjourned without additional action on HMO reform. Millions of Americans enrolled in managed care plans were frustrated by our inability to send a bill to the President's desk, but remained hopeful that Congress would produce effective patients rights legislation when it convened this year.

In the 106th Congress, this body passed by an overwhelming margin comprehensive managed care reform legislation that got the emergency services language right. But the other body's bill did not. And in the conference that failed to produce a compromise bill, some conferees fought against the language approved by the House, language that is consistent with Medicare and Medicaid law, language that is strongly supported by doctors, hospitals, consumer groups, and one of the oldest and largest health maintenance organizations in the United States, Kaiser Health Plans.

And so, joined by my colleague from New Jersey, Mrs. ROUKEMA, today I am reintroducing the Access to Emergency Medical Services Act in the 107th Congress. I encourage all members of Congress to study this issue carefully, listen to their constituents, and support passage of this fundamental legislation. The American consumers deserve to be protected by an authentic prudent layperson standard that ensures them access to the full range of services their acute emergency conditions require, and Congress should give them this right without further delay.

#### AMTRAK'S THIRTIETH BIRTHDAY

### HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 2, 2001*

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, Congress created Amtrak thirty years ago because we realized that along with cars and planes, passenger rail was a vital part of America's transportation future. Today, as we celebrate Amtrak's 30th birthday, the need for passenger rail is greater than ever. All across this great land, travelers are growing sick and tired of spending so many hours stuck in traffic, or hanging around airport terminals. They want an alternative.

In my home state of Tennessee, there is strong support for passenger rail service. And in my role as Ranking Member of the Railroads Subcommittee, I am working to restore Amtrak service to Tennessee, because passenger rail service will continue to grow in popularity and importance.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to congestion on our highways and in our airways. It's called High-Speed Passenger Rail, and it's a way of traveling that's pleasant and easy, and allows travelers to make the most of their valuable time.

So far, high-speed rail exists only in the Northeast. But Amtrak's vision is to build a national passenger railroad system consisting of many regional high-speed corridors linked by long-distance service.

That's why I strongly support the High Speed Rail Investment Act of 2001. It will provide Amtrak with what our highways and airports already have: A source of long-term capital with which to build the high-speed rail corridors of the future.

With high-speed rail, we can unclog America's transportation arteries, give travelers the choices they deserve, and fix our broken transportation system. Passage of the High Speed Rail Act of 2001 isn't just in Amtrak's interest; it's in America's interest.

So as we congratulate Amtrak on thirty years of service to America, let us resolve to pass the High Speed Rail Investment Act of 2001—and finally get America moving again!

#### TRIBUTE TO THE FRIENDS OF LAKEWOOD PROGRAM

### HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 2, 2001*

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an outstanding example of parental and community involvement in education in my district. The Friends of Lakewood program is a community effort dedicated to enhancing the learning experience of students at Lakewood Elementary School in Dallas. One of their most successful initiatives has been the "Math Maniacs" program. With more than one-third of students participating, the fruits of this program are evident in the school's continued success at the Dallas ISD Math Olympiad.

As we all know, the participation of parents and the community is crucial to educational success. When children see that parents care about education, it motivates them to aim higher and become better students.

The Friends of Lakewood program is a model for community leadership and involvement in education—I comment the parents, students, and community of Lakewood for their success.

#### ACCESS TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ACT

### HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 2, 2001*

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Access to Emergency Medical Services Act with my colleague, Mr. CARDIN of Maryland. I would first like to thank Mr. CARDIN for taking the initiative on this issue and continually bringing this bill to Congress's attention.

This important legislation is an effort to allow medical professionals to make decisions in the emergency room, not the insurance company bureaucrats.

Insurance companies reportedly have refused to pay emergency room bills when patients did not obtain prior authorization for

emergency treatment. It is inappropriate and dangerous for insurance companies to require pre-authorization for emergency services. Indeed, emergency conditions are by definition problems that require immediate medical attention without delay.

Patients are also being financially punished for taking precautionary action and admitting themselves to the emergency room for a critical situation. We should not attach a high personal risk to seeking out emergency care. I have heard many stories of individuals who go to the emergency room with symptoms that indicate a serious illness, perhaps a heart attack. They undergo a battery of tests and find out that the heart attack was something else, perhaps a bad case of heartburn. That should be good news. However, weeks later they find out that those tests cost hundreds, maybe thousands of dollars, and their insurance companies refuse to pay.

This legislation will put an end to bottom-line medicine and keep insurance companies out of the emergency room. Decisions on the medical treatment of the ill and injured should be placed back in the hands trained to save lives, not dollars. The Access to Emergency Medical Services Act of 2001 would require insurers to pay for emergency room visits based on a "prudent layperson" definition of an emergency and a patient's symptoms, rather than the final diagnosis. An individual seeking medical attention for what they "prudently" determine to be a medical emergency should not be penalized for that decision. This bill would also prohibit insurance companies' pre-authorization requirements for emergency care. Finally, the bill requires that health care plans and emergency physicians work jointly to coordinate follow-up care.

This bill does not replace the need for comprehensive health insurance reform. The initiatives proposed by Congressmen GANSKE and DINGELL are essential for a broad reform of our health insurance system. That being said, this is a necessary bill to pass to protect citizens from physical injury caused by paperwork delays from their insurance carriers.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this important legislation which ensures that an insurance company's response will not make the difference between life and death in emergency room.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF MR. ED WILLIS AND HIS SERVICE TO R.B. WRIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### HON. SAXBY CHAMBLISS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 2, 2001*

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to Mr. Ed Willis who is retiring as principal of R.B. Wright Elementary School.

The warm and caring manner in which Ed led the school let every student know that they were special and loved. Ed is the consummate educator because he lets his teachers teach and supports them in their efforts. His students always achieve the maximum of their ability.

Ed is the epitome of the caring, professional administrator. His goal has always been to develop the total child: academically, socially, physically, and culturally. He commands excellence from himself and his staff, and his rewards come in seeing his students succeed.